Decentralisation of procurement of foodgrains

4559. SHRI K.M. KHAN: WilPthe Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have, recently, decided to decentralise procurement of foodgrains for distribution through PDS;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that this matter was discussed with the State Government; and

(d) if so, what is the outcome of the consultations with the State Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) The Union Government has been encouraging States to adopted scheme of decentralized procurement of foodgrains. The scheme of decentralized procurement was adopted by the Government of West Bengal with effect from KMS 1997-98 for the purpose of procurement of paddy/rice. The Government of Uttar Pradesh adopted the scheme for procurement of wheat and paddy/ rice with effect from 1999-2000. The Government of Madhya Pradesh adopted the scheme for the purpose of procurement of wheat with effect from RMS 1999-2000.

The proposal of the State Government of Chhattisgarh to take up the scheme of decentralized procurement has been approved recently.

(c) and (d) Decentralised procurement and distribution of foodgrains was one of the items included in the Agenda for the Conference of Chief Ministers on WTO Agreement and Food Management on 21.5.2001. However, there was no consensus on this issue and a Standing Committee comprising some Union

Ministers and State Chief Ministers, besides the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, was constituted to look into various aspects of Food Management and Agricultural Exports. The matter was further discussed with the States in the 1st and 4th meeting of the Committee on 6.7.2001 and 23.4.2002 respectively. The Union Secretary, Department of Food & Public Distribution also convened meetings with the Food Secretaries/representatives of the State Governments of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttaranchal to discuss the scheme of Decentralised procurement. In the First meeting of the Standing Committee held on 6.7.2001, it was clarified to the States that the procurement of foodgrains would not be imposed on any State, against their wishes. The present arrangement of procurement of foodgrains would continue where States are not yet prepared to shift to a decentralized system of procurement.

New Consumer Protection Act

4560. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to have a new Consumer Protection Act;

(b) if so, whether the provisions of this Act shall apply to all the claims except in respect of which corresponding remedies of judicial nature are available;

(c) if so, what are its main features;

(d) to what extent, this Consumer Protection Act would be useful; and

(e) by when a final decision is likely to be taken for introducing the proposed legislation in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (e) No, Sir. However, a Bill to amend